



[Antonio Gramsci, 1891-1937](#)

Hegemony Up To Date

We have given first place this week to Perry Anderson. Today, another readable and user-friendly text is offered in the form of Trent Brown's more recent essay on "Gramsci and Hegemony" (attached, and downloadable via the link given below).

Put simply, the idea of "hegemony" is not different from the idea of "dictatorship", as used in the phrases: "dictatorship of the proletariat" and "dictatorship of the bourgeoisie", for two examples.

Hegemony means class domination over another class, or over all other classes. We may say that Working Class Hegemony is not necessarily always coercive, and that for the most part it

would rely upon consent or acquiescence.

But, as Trent Brown points out, the same is true of the bourgeois dictatorship that we have at present. It depends, if not upon actual force, then upon “manufactured consent” backed up by the threat of force. Force and the threat of force are always present. Violent force will normally be applied without hesitation by any ruling class whenever its hegemony is threatened.

Whether we are using the term “Working Class Hegemony”, or the term “Dictatorship of the Proletariat”, it remains the case that the bourgeoisie continues to exist under such dictatorship or hegemony. Capitalist relations will still exist under working class hegemony, but they will be supervised by the working class, acting collectively as the proletarian state.

“Dictatorship of the Proletariat” does not mean “Extermination of the Bourgeoisie”.

Trent Brown points out that Gramsci in particular had a well-worked-out theory of how the working class can progress from self-interested economism, otherwise called syndicalism (or in South Africa, “workerism”), through self-conscious class solidarity, to the formation of revolutionary alliances with other classes.

Comrades who may be interested in Gramsci’s legacy beyond the concept of “hegemony”, may like to read the article “[From Organic to Committed Intellectuals or Critical Pedagogy,](#)

[Commitment, and Praxis](#)” (click to access the web page). For a representative example of Gramsci’s writing, please click here: **[“Some Aspects of the Southern Question”](#)**.

Trent Brown puts the matter of hegemony like this:

“Gramsci reckoned that in the historical context that he was working in, the passage of a social group from self-interested reformism to national hegemony could occur most effectively via the political party.”

This is not different from Lenin’s view.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: **[Gramsci and Hegemony, 2009, Trent Brown](#)**.
- To download any of the CU courses in PDF files **[please click here](#)**.